SACHAR, Abram

Abram L. Sachar, First President Of Brandeis University, Dies at 94

Dr. Abram Leon Sachar, a historian who led the Hillel Foundation for 22 years and was the founding president of Brandeis University in Waltham, Mass., died on Saturday at his home in Newton, Mass. He was 94.

The cause of death was respiratory failure, said Dennis Nealon, a spokesman for the university.

Mr. Sachar was widely regarded as the driving force behind the development of Brandeis into a major research institution.

When it opened under his direction in 1948, Brandeis had 107 students and 13 faculty members. It now has 3,700 undergraduate and graduate students, and a full-time faculty of 360.

Served on U.S. Panels

During his 20 years as president, Dr. Sachar raised $250 million for the school and saw the campus grow from a few buildings on the site of a bankrupt medical school to a complex of 90 buildings on 235 acres. He subsequently assumed the post of chancellor of the university, serving as a sort of roving ambassador for the institution.

Dr. Sachar served on numerous Federal panels, including the United States Holocaust Commission, and the Advisory Commission on International Education and Cultural Affairs.

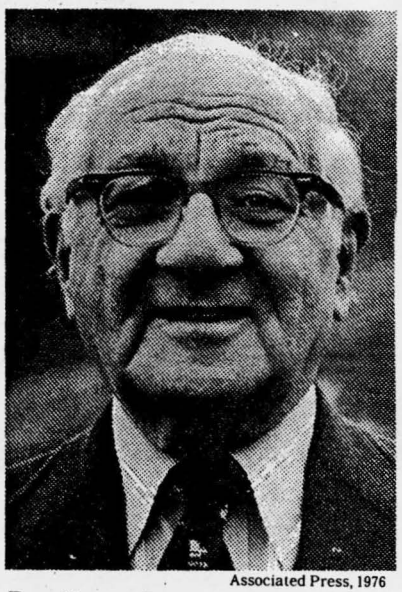
He was born in New York on Feb. 15, 1899, to immigrant parents. His father, Samuel, was born in what is now Lithuania; his mother, Sarah Abramowitz, was born in Jerusalem.

When he was 7, his family moved to St. Louis, where he attended Washington University, receiving bachelor's and master's degrees in history. He received a doctorate in history from Cambridge University in 1923.

Returning to the United States, Dr. Sachar joined the history faculty of the University of Illinois, where he remained for 24 years. While there, he became a leader of the Hillel Foundation, which was founded at the university. He served as director of the National Hillel Foundation from 1933 to 1948 and as chairman from 1948 to 1955, before retiring to become president of Brandeis.

Dr. Sachar was the author of several books, including "The Course of Our Times," "A History of the Jews," "The Redemption of the Unwanted," "Factors in Jewish History," "Sufferance is the Badge" and "A Host At Last," a history of Brandeis.

He is survived by his wife of 67 years, Thelma Horowitz; two sons, Dr. David B. Sachar of Englewood Cliffs, N.J., and Howard M. Sachar of Kensington, Md.



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Dr. Abram Leon Sachar

SA 8/13-19/93

EDITORIALS

Dr. Abram L. Sachar

A long and fruitful life in American education ended on July 24 with the death of Dr. Abram L. Sachar, founding president of Brandeis University, at age 94. To say that he built the magnificent campus of Brandeis from the single structure from which he started his presidency is no exaggeration. By 1948, when Brandeis opened, this already distinguished historian had made the Hillel Foundation into a national force for service to American Jewish college students. But his greatest achievement was before him as he brought reality to the dream of a Jewish sponsored secular university, and drove the vision that would in a matter of a couple of decades bring that institution to hoary Ivy League standards.

Spell-binding speaker, careful researcher, gripping writer, demanding administrator, peerless fund-raiser, all of this that he was, Dr. Sachar was still something more wonderful. He climbed to the highest of Jewish conceptions of humanity by being a teacher with faith in and dedication to his "students" who comprised members of the American Jewish community of all ages. He sought to instill the insatiable hunger and respect for learning that abided in himself into all of those whom he could reach, in person, through his many books, and by memorable television sessions. He inspired students to become professionals and scholars. He guided Jewish layman who came to this country as boys and had to go to work, and therefore were in many cases not conventionally educated, to become proxy "professors" by giving generously from what they had earned in a yielding America to provide the Waltham campus with structures and facilities and teachers and laboratories, in the spirit of paying back the country that had benefited them through providing learned and productive future generations.

No matter how many times Abram Sachar spoke, one longed again and again to hear his interpretations, his opinions, his unique insights of an historical or contemporary event, or the assessment of a person's act or life. His keen understanding of this material of living was sparked by an involvement in everything that passed under his eyes. As much a facility of discernment for him as was his own intelligence was that of his sensitive and brilliant wife of 67 years, Thelma. She "teaches" gently in her own way with the same elan as her late mate. May she be comforted by the thought that Dr. Sachar lived to see their sons achieve notability in their chosen fields and Brandeis University back onto the track of greatness.

JA 7/30-8/5/93

Abram L. Sachar

Abram Leon Sachar, author, historian, founding president of Brandeis University and pioneer in the field of American higher education, died at the age of 94.

He won recognition as the driving force behind the molding of Brandeis into one of the youngest major research universities in the United States and the only nonsectarian college or university sponsored by the American Jewish community. In his 20 years as its president (1948–1968), he propelled the Waltham, Mass. school toward the national recognition it holds today.

He earned a reputation for being an outstanding fundraiser, raising more than $250 million for Brandeis during his tenure as president and later as chancellor. One of the largest gifts during his presidency was a $19 million grant from Louis Rosentiel for the campus' Basic Medical Sciences Research Center.

During his lifetime, he achieved national and international recognition for his contributions to higher education. The West German government awarded him its Grosse Verdienstkreuz mit Stern decoration in 1969, in recognition of the program which brings students from countries around the world to Brandeis each year, with the obligation to return to their countries to offer their specialized training.

Nationally, beginning in 1950 and continuing throughout his life, he was the recipient of honorary degrees from more than 30 American colleges and universities, including Brandeis; his alma mater, Washington University; Tufts University; Providence College; Hebrew Union College and Harvard University. In 1973, Brandeis dedicated the Abram L. and Thelma Sachar International Center, which houses the Lemberg Program in International Economics and Finance.

He was born in new York City on Feb. 15, 1899 to immigrant parents.



Abram L. Sachar

His father, Samuel was born in Lithuania; his mother, Sarah (Abramowitz) was born in Jerusalem. When he was seven years old, his family moved to St. Louis, Mo.

He received his A.B. and master's degree in history from Washington University, St. Louis. He undertook special research in England on the Victorian House of Lords and was awarded his Ph.D. from Emmanuel College, Cambridge University, in 1923.

Upon his return from England in 1923, he joined the history faculty of the University of Illinois, where he remained for 24 years. There he became one of the pioneers of the Hillel Foundation, which began there.

He was chairman of the National Hillel Foundation from 1948–1955. He served as its national director from 1933–1948, before retiring to accept the presidency of Brandeis University. When he took it over, the university consisted of a handful of buildings donated by the Middlesex Medical School.

He authored a number of books, including *The Course of Our Times, A History of the Jews; The Redemption of the Unwanted; Factors in Jewish History; Sufferance is the Badge*; and a chronicle about Brandeis' unique history, *A Host At Last.*

He leaves his wife, Thelma of Newton, Mass.; two sons, Dr. David B. Sachar, and Howard M. Sachar. He was predeceased by his third son, Dr. Edward J. Sachar.

IN MEMORIAM

Abram L. Sachar

The Board of Directors of the Combined Jewish Philanthropies mourns the death of Abram L. Sachar, educator, writer, historian, valued friend and colleague whose dedication to our community and to the Jewish people has inspired generations throughout his life.

As the founding president and then chancellor of Brandeis University, Dr. Sachar achieved national and international recognition for his contributions to higher education. He was the recipient of honorary degrees from more than 30 American colleges and universities and authored several books, including *The Course of our Times, A History of the Jews, The Redemption of the Unwanted* and a chronicle of Brandeis, *A Host at Last.*

Born in New York City to immigrant parents, he was educated at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri and Emmanuel College, Cambridge University, England. At the University of Illinois, where he taught for 24 years, he became one of the pioneers of the Hillel Foundation, which began there. He served as the chairman of the National Hillel Foundation from 1948–55 before retiring to accept the presidency of Brandeis University.

Dr. Sachar will long be remembered for his vision and brilliance and the unique contribution he made to the Jewish community and the academic world. To his wife, Thelma, and his sons, David and Howard, we offer our sincere condolences in the hope that the knowledge of all who mourn with them will be of some comfort.

Alan R. Goldstein
Chair, Board of Directors

Barry Shrage
President

Combined Jewish Philanthropies of Greater Boston

"Affectionately, Abe"—A Tribute to Abram L. Sachar

By Milton Hindus

Abram Leon Sachar, who signed his books, "Affectionately, Abe," to many of us, was an academic statesman and historian, who will simply not to gently into the archives of Brandeis University, over which he presided formally for its first 20 years (1948-1968) and informally (as Chancellor and Chancellor Emeritus) for nearly 30 years since then. He strove manfully to the end to control his own version of its history by working hard preparing a revised and updated edition of his book, *A Host at Last*, the account of the university's phenomenal growth (in prestige, in size of physical plant, and in sheer numbers of programs, distinguished faculty and superior students) during his presidency. One of our last meetings in his office was concerned with corrections and additions he had solicited from me for the new edition he was working on.

Research the files of the old *Menorah Journal* recently on an unrelated subject, I unexpectedly came across an interesting book review by Sachar dating back to the 1920s. It was a round-up review of several new books about Benjamin Disraeli and obviously written con amore for its brilliant and witty subject. It was more than a competent performance; it was learned in substance and graceful in style and announced the arrival on the scene of a new-fledged Phil.D from Cambridge University, who had the equipment to become both a scholar and a popular writer, a rare combination. It was erudite but not showy and had a care for the common reader sensitive to the nuances of the English language. Its qualities were those which, years later, made his *History of the Jews* a Book-of-the-Month Club bonus after it had already gone through numerous printings.

The review reminded me of a talk on Disraeli I heard him give during the first year of the new university's existence. It was in the auditorium of a large temple in Brookline after a Friday evening service, and intended as another introduction to the Greater Boston Jewish community. Among the invited guests were the minuscule faculty of the new institution, and its "star," the novelist and scholar Ludwig Lewisohn, who was our Professor of Comparative Literature, and shared the platform with Dr. Sachar. Lewisohn, whose fervor and eloquence had made him deservedly famous as a speaker as well as a writer, spoke with great effect for five minutes appealing to the patriotic Jewish and religious feelings of his audience and setting the state for the main talk by Sachar, which was a 50-minute polished lecture on the wondrous life and career of the British Conservative leader, Prime Minister, novelist, wit, proto-Zionist, who from being the commoner, Mr. Disraeli, was later raised to the peerage as Lord Beaconsfield.

At the time, I clearly remember that the evening bolstered by confidence in the soundness of the choice I had made in responding to Sachar's invitation to join the faculty of what was then a speculative academic venture. Only in retrospect has it become clear that the lecture might have told me almost as much about the lecturer as about his fascinating subject. It was tactful, indeed inspired, for him not to approach the object of his immediate needs crudely and directly but instead to display the real ability that had given him his academic credentials. The community knew his need without his having to mention it, and the faculty present was reassured that he was one of themselves. The romantic and improbable tale of Disraeli's career suggested that wonders never cease and that it is possible for an individual to be not only a creature of circumstances but decisively to help shape them into new realities.

There was something else about Disraeli that attracted Sachar. It is caught, I believe, in the conclusion of an article on him by Frederick Greenwood in an old edition of *The Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Despite the christening arranged for him by his ambitious literary father Isaas, in the very year he should have been confirmed, Greenwood says, "He was thoroughly and unchangeably a Jew. At but one remove by birth from southern Europe and the East, he was an Englishman in nothing but his devotion to England and his solicitude for her honour and prosperity."

We have but to change the words Southern Europe (Disraeli's ancestors came from Venice) to eastern Europe and the name England to America, to have a description that fits Abram Sachar comfortably. He was thoroughly and unchangeably a Jew, concerned with the fate of other Jews wherever they were to be found in the world, an no less concerned for the honor and prosperity of the great country in which he had been born and in which his people has found refuge and generosity unexampled perhaps in its checkered history. His feelings, in this respect, were not unlike those of the great Justice for whom the university he headed has been named, and also those of many of us who answered his call to join him there. It is not the least of his achievements that the institution he did so much to strengthen should now be prepared to proceed without his presence.